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# ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

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MARCH, 1855.

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## WAR ALWAYS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME.

Time, though slow in its influence even on individuals, slower still upon communities, and far more so upon the vast cluster of communities called the commonwealth of nations, is nevertheless a sure and mighty corrector of traditional delusions. How many long ages it took to unclinch the hold on men's minds of withcraft, of knight-errantry, of trial by ordeal and combat, of private feudal wars, of plunder on the high seas as an honorable profession, of traffic in human flesh as a lawful business, of the right, if not the duty to wage religious wars, to dictate faith at the point of the sword, and coerce conscience by the fires and gibbets of martyrdom.

Most of these strange errors have passed away from the more enlightened portions of Christendom ; but the chief delusions of war still retain their hold even on well-informed Christians. One of these is the supposition, that the progress of Christian civilization will work an essential change in the nature of war, and eventually recast it so fully in the mould of the gospel as to make it part and parcel of a pure Christianity. The advocates of this theory would retain the custom as right in itself, but set the gospel at work to correct its abuses, and thus make it in time the handmaid of our holy and peaceful religion. They seem to expect a day when powder and balls, lead and steel, cannon and bombs, revolvers and Minnie rifles, and Paixhans and Lancaster guns, and all the other horrible improvements in the art of wholesale murder and destruction, in the hellish enginery and tactics of war, will be pressed into the service of a pure, all-pervading, all-controlling Christianity ; and when mankind, evangelically trained in the science of human butchery, will at length learn to shoot, and stab, and hew, and trample each other down upon

the battle-field, to sink fleets, and blow up forts, and burn cities, and ravage whole empires, and cover half a continent with the groans of the wounded, and the shrieks of the dying, with the wailings of widows, and the cries of orphans, all in a Christian way, in the spirit of Christ!

Do you startle at such an array of revolting absurdities? But they all come as fair, logical inferences from the supposition, that Christianity, rightly applied to the case, is to improve, instead of utterly abolishing war. Improve war! You might as well talk of improving theft and robbery, murder and assassination, idolatry, polygamy and adultery. Such logic is rotten to the core, a contradiction alike of Christianity and of common sense. The only way the gospel deals with such practices, is to abolish them. Just so with war. You may indeed abate some of its evils, and refine some of its grosser barbarities; but you can never change its essential character. If you could carry it into the millennium itself, or into the very abodes of the blessed above, it would even there retain its foul characteristics, and still be the fierce and fiendish struggle of ambition, hatred and revenge. No degree of Christian civilization that allows war at all, will ever suffice to alter its essential character, or to diminish in any considerable degree its guilt or its evils, its atrocities or its horrors.

We are not singular in these views. The *London Times*, a staunch advocate of the war now in progress, says:—

But there is one illusion which the columns before us (accounts from the seat of war) utterly dispel. Of late years there has been a growing belief that, should war unhappily return,—and even that was doubted,—it would not visit us in the rude guise under which it has ever been known to our ancestors. There was so much progress and improvement in every thing, in the science of war, in the comforts of the soldier, in all kinds of mechanical inventions, in the mutual courtesy of nations, and every thing else, that people fancied battles would be fought as cleanly and as smoothly as a game of chess, or a sham fight on Woolwich Common. The only difficulty was to see how war would be decided in future. Some thought it would be an affair of tactics, others that it would be a question of rifles, and there have not been wanting those who feared that, in the universal diffusion of science and manufactures, the hardy habits of the less civilized nations might turn the scale against those bred in comparative comfort and ease. These speculations are disposed of for the present. War has re-appeared—war between civilized, scientific, mechanical nations—between States that have immense war establishments, national debts, and all the rest of it. And war turns out to be just the same as ever—the same uncouth, disagreeable, savage, inhuman thing, that it ever was since the beginning of history. It is still reckless, malicious, wanton, and

absolutely envious of happiness and peace; it still produces the most miserable scenes, the wildest adventures, the most perilous situations, the most horrid calamities, and those large masses of misery which men had thought too vast and too hideous for these snug and quiet times.

Not to go further back, take the expedition as it arrives off the coast of the Crimea. The soldiers and sailors are falling by scores under the stroke of an inscrutable pest. The army lands; and, after all our rehearsals at Chobham, it bivouacs in the mud, and in rain. For several days it suffers an actual plague of thirst. Then comes the march, on the very first day of which baggage is sacrificed, and the rear is left behind. At last comes the battle, tardy to those who had expected it, though only the beginning of the end. It is no paper fight. The carnage, confusion, feats of daring, the collision of thousands with thousands, the medley of the victors and the vanquished, are those of the old battles. Then, after a night of triumph and horrid suffering, the sun rises on thousands groaning, writhing, and in worse agonies of thirst, over the bloody field. The writer, himself racked with fever, describes the melancholy burying of the dead, and the slow procession of the wounded, borne on the shoulders of the survivors, or the rude carts of the country, to the distant shore. One by one they die on the field, on the journey, on the beach, in the boats, on board the floating hospitals. Those that escaped the battle, and were its most conspicuous heroes, do not escape the pest. One by one they too fall. The march is renewed in the doubtful morning twilight. On the one side is heard the solemn hymn of triumph, raised by the victors from the heights they had gained, and on the other side, stretched over the field, is seen a dark mass, half living, half dead. They are the Russian wounded left behind, and in the midst of them, like "the last man," a solitary surgeon, left to do what he could with that world of misery, his only hope of success, and even of his own life, being the chance that his mission would be understood and recognized by the rude enemy certain soon to surround him. Follow the advancing columns. Few comforts and little rest have they gained by their victory. They suffer in rapid succession the burning sun, the nightly chill, and the morning dew. They enter villages, and find desolation; for the Cossacks have been there before them. What is spared they lay waste themselves, as it were, in rivalry. Surprised to find splendid mansions, furnished with every elegance and luxury, in a country which they had heard was a pestilential desert, they admire and destroy. Weary and thirsty, they rush into gardens, orchards and vineyards, and devour till they sicken and die.

Has war changed its character? There is not a circumstance in these narratives that is not common to all wars; and, unfortunately, all that we read of in our youth when wars had ceased through all the world, re-appears with sad fidelity. It is impossible to restrain the license of soldiers. Self-preservation compels a retreating army to leave a desert behind it. A desert it does leave. Germany has not even yet recovered from the effects of the Thirty Years' War, and the armies that have passed over the land."